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## Rousseau on the Tourist Trail

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## **Rousseau on the tourist trail**

Nicola J Watson, Open University

### **Bio for Notes on Contributors**

**Professor Nicola Watson** currently works for the Open University, and has held posts at Oxford, Harvard and Northwestern Universities. She is the author of *Revolution and the Form of the British Novel, 1790-1825* (OUP, 1994), *England's Elizabeth: An Afterlife of Fame and Fantasy* (with Michael Dobson, OUP, 2003), and *The Literary Tourist: Readers and Places in Romantic and Victorian Britain* (Palgrave, 2006), along with two edited volumes and many essays on romantic period literature and culture.

### **Abstract**

This essay looks at the post-Napoleonic tourist trail associated with Rousseau in Switzerland, reconstructing the tourist sentiment which the figure of the philosopher elicited. This was a complex meld of the biographical and the fictional, which solicited the self-conscious and performative occupation by the visitor of a Rousseauistic sensibility. By comparing and contrasting early nineteenth-century travellers' accounts of visiting Voltaire's chateau at Ferney and Rousseau's homes, especially his farmhouse refuge on the Ile St Pierre in the Lac de Bienne, this paper traces the emergence and contours of a new, romantic type of tourist sensibility and matching practices created by and around Rousseau before considering the way in which this model was subsumed within the exilic appeal of the Byronic.

### **I Preparations**

For aristocrats engaged on the Grand Tour, Switzerland had primarily registered as an inconveniently mountainous barrier to any journey to Rome. By the last decade of the eighteenth century the same landscape was in the process of becoming 'romantic' and a tourist draw in its own right. Part of that cultural transformation was effected through the mapping of the writings of Jean Jacques Rousseau – fictional and autobiographical -- onto the area.<sup>1</sup> This mapping was achieved through successive reiterations of tourist visit and travel-writing, both privately-circulated and published,

which enabled further repetition of the experience by others whether through their own travelling or through turning pages in the drawing-room back home.

One of the questions thrown up by tracing the rise and nature of tourism associated with Rousseau and his works within Switzerland (and indeed elsewhere) is to what extent the case of Rousseau is special. To what extent is it reasonable to claim that the sort of tourist sentiment which he elicited, which, as I will be arguing below, melded the biographical and the fictional and seemed to solicit in addition the occupation of a Rousseauistic sensibility, was first created by and around him? Does it differ markedly from the type of interest expressed by romantic period tourists in other literary localities, for instance, those around and about the locality such as Gibbon's summerhouse, Voltaire's Ferney or, a little later, de Staël's Coppet? One way to get at this question is to examine the great outburst of travel-writing that followed the end of the Napoleonic Wars. With the opening of routes through continental Europe travellers of every kind and nation promptly retraced and reinflected the mothballed itineraries of the Grand Tour, roaming anew through Switzerland and down into Italy. Their writings, taken together, sketch out a map of canonical places with literary associations within nineteenth-century culture. Geneva and its environs, associated primarily with Voltaire and Rousseau, with side-shows provided by Gibbon and de Staël, formed an important part of such itineraries. In what follows, I endeavour to reconstruct and compare visiting and tourist practices as they developed around Voltaire and Rousseau after their deaths from the 1780s to the 1820s so as to consider the privileged place of Rousseau on this new affective map. But first, back to a year in which Voltaire and Rousseau were both very much alive.

## **II Destinations**

In 1764, a young and callow James Boswell had inveigled his father into letting him off the leash to travel to Switzerland. Already a confirmed celebrity hound, he proposed to visit two famous figures currently living in the environs of Geneva: Voltaire, holding court at his chateau in Ferney just outside the city, and Rousseau, presently retired in the little village of Môtiers-Travers, where he had just started to write his *Confessions*. ‘I shall see Voltaire. I shall also see Switzerland and Rousseau. These two men are to me greater objects than most statues or pictures’, he wrote on 28 August (*Letters*, I, 57). With his usual combination of enthusiasm and breathtaking self-importance, Boswell made multiple visits to both men in the spirit of the connoisseur Grand Tourist. Cannily, however, he made very different approaches to the two. To the seventy-two-year-old Voltaire, he presented himself with a formal letter of introduction, and was initially received in the usual way into the quasi-royal formalities of Voltaire’s household. Inspired by what he considered a happily apposite idea, he subsequently arranged to spend a night under Voltaire’s roof, recording that he embellished the occasion by suitable reading: ‘I went to my room, and read his *Mahomet* in his own house’ (Pottle, 282). By contrast, he presented himself to the reclusive Rousseau, not by means of his perfectly good letter of introduction from a mutual acquaintance General Keith, but by means of a letter carefully modelled upon the epistolary discourse of Rousseau’s young lover St Preux in Rousseau’s best-selling novel, *Julie: ou, La Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761). Whereas with Voltaire he had consciously entered into the punctilious politenesses of salon society, with Rousseau he forced a one-to-one conversation of the heart. One might say that Boswell enacted an enlightenment visit with Voltaire, but a proto-romantic one with Rousseau. It is hard not to regret that he was too late to visit the third in the trio of celebrated literary

lions domiciled on the shores of Lake Geneva, Edward Gibbon, or that he was far too early to visit the fourth, Germaine de Staël.

Boswell was lucky enough to visit the homes of Voltaire and Rousseau in their lifetimes. By 1778 they were both dead. Yet the stream of foreign visitors determined to encounter these figures in their native habitats only increased after their deaths. Unlike Boswell, late eighteenth-century tourists did not generally come to Geneva solely in pursuit of Voltaire and Rousseau; typically en route to Italy, they paused in the city to enjoy the considerable English and cosmopolitan society gathered there. ‘Voltaire’ and ‘Rousseau’ were conceived of as possible sights and destinations among many possible sights and destinations. In Voltaire’s case, this meant a visit to the chateau and village of Ferney where he had spent his last years, with a possible diversion to Les Délices, where he had settled for five years between 1755 and 1760 to escape trouble with the French authorities. Rousseau enthusiasts had a wider variety of sites to choose from. Rousseau had been born in Geneva and spent much of his youth around the lake-shores. In later life he had found it necessary to flee from one canton to another according to whom he had offended most recently. As a result a number of houses and places associated with him emerged as of interest: the house in Montmorency, Les Charmettes in Chambéry where he conducted his youthful liaison with Madame de Warens, the house in Môtiers-Travers where he lived with his mistress Thérèse Lavasseur in later life, and the farmhouse on the Île St Pierre in the lac de Biemme where he spent a long summer after fleeing Môtiers and before departing for England. This possible itinerary was further elaborated by the locations featured in Rousseau’s celebrated novel *Julie: ou, La Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761), most especially the village of Clarens, the rocks of Meillerie, and the shores of the lake next to the castle of Chillon.

A sense of a Swiss landscape inhabited and indeed animated by these dead writers and their works emerges sometime in the late 1770s and 1780s. The impressive multi-volume *Tableaux topographiques, pittoresques, physiques de la Suisse* put out by Laborde and Zurlauben et.al. in the 1780s features a number of literary places, including engravings of Voltaire's chateau, his tomb, and the view from the chateau, and a number of scenes featuring Rousseau. However, places associated with Voltaire are treated very differently from those associated with Rousseau. There are fewer of them, and they are primarily topographical in their import, rather than biographical. Voltaire only gets one mention by name, in the caption to a picture of his tomb (IV, no. 161), which seems the least one might expect. By comparison, the volumes include no less than five depictions of Môtiers-Travers and its environs, all of which mention Rousseau's residence in the captions. Three of them show the philosopher's house, and the scene 'Maison de J.J. Rousseau à Moutiers-Travers' shows, as the caption notes, 'ce philosophe' 'sur un banc, proposant des Gâteaux à des Enfants pour prix de la Course.'<sup>2</sup> [the philosopher, on a bench, offering cakes to children as prizes for racing]. Some thirty years later (after the cessation of the Napoleonic wars revived the flow of tourists), the appetite for this sort of thing had only increased. In 1819, *Vues de différentes habitations de J Rousseau* included views of all Rousseau's houses illustrating chunks of the *Confessions*. These included, for example, a view of Rousseau's bedroom on the Île St Pierre and a depiction of Rousseau 'botanizing' at Ermenonville, his last home in France.

The imbalance between places associated with Voltaire and Rousseau that the *Tableaux topographiques* manifests is in part, of course, simply the result of

Rousseau's perpetual changing of asylum. But it was also a by-product of Rousseau's autobiographical accounts of these moves, documented extensively in the *Confessions* and the *Rêveries du promeneur solitaire*, published respectively in 1781-8 and 1782. The effect was strengthened by the publication of both in illustrated editions from early on. These editions included a number of famous scenes which would come to be repeated over and over again in both visual and textual accounts, such as 'L'embarquement des lapins' ['the embarkation of the rabbits'], which documented Rousseau's transport of rabbits to populate the little island off the Île St Pierre in the lac de Bienne, which he describes in the Fifth essay of the *Rêveries*. But there is also evidence that suggests that locations associated with Voltaire were visited in quite a different way to those associated with Rousseau, and that the different treatment accorded these places in the *Tableaux topographiques* may have mirrored actual visiting practices. The practices of displaying, visiting, and writing up places associated with these *philosophes* were continuous with the protocols established around visiting the living writers – Voltaire was visited at home as though one had come with a formal letter of introduction to his salon, Rousseau was glimpsed in retirement wandering his loved places by the attentive eye of kindred spirits. Following, all unwitting, in Boswell's footsteps, visitors to Voltaire's house thus followed routines that, with the benefit of historical hind-sight, seem old-fashioned even for the time, whereas visitors to Rousseauistic sites seem to be participating in and elaborating on an emergent sensibility.

### III Visiting Voltaire

Visiting Ferney in Voltaire's lifetime was a matter of strict protocol, as Boswell's extensive description of his visit, supported by the many other accounts of those who knocked on the door of the self-styled 'inn-keeper of Europe,' attests. Boswell rounds off his lively account of visiting Ferney with a plan to out-Voltaire Voltaire:

Our important scene must not appear till after his death. But I have a great mind to send over to London a little sketch of my reception at Ferney, of the splendid manner in which M de Voltaire lives and of the brilliant conversation of this celebrated author at the age of seventy-two. The sketch would be a letter, addressed to you, full of gaiety and full of friendship. I would send it to one of the best public papers or magazines. But this is probably a flight of my over-heated mind (Pottle, 286-7).

Boswell's 'flight' came to nothing. But his remarks epitomise the way that a visit to Voltaire was conceived at the time: as the consumption of a display of personal splendour and of brilliant conversation that could be redacted as cultural capital, to be exchanged in familiar letters between an intellectual and social elite; and that might by analogy eventually be marketable to a mass readership, including by way of obituary. In the event, Boswell's remarks previewed the ways in which Voltaire's Ferney would come to be consumed after his death.

Posthumous visitors would endeavour to replicate the experience of the visit in Voltaire's lifetime as a way of enrolling themselves in the cosmopolitan elite. They



would admire the grounds, the view, and the chateau's façade, visit the church, comment on the empty tomb, and then present credentials to (or at any rate bribe) the concierge who would provide a conducted tour of Voltaire's apartments, including the bedroom in which he had conducted his famous *levée*. Individual travellers' accounts are borne out by the first extended description of the chateau which appeared in print in 1783, also couched as a traveller's account, but clearly aimed at a wider tourist readership. *Description de Ferney et du Château de Voltaire, avec quelques anecdotes relatives de ce Philosophe* lives up to what its title promises, supplying an enormously detailed descriptive catalogue of the house, its grounds, the church, Voltaire's tomb, Voltaire's own rooms, those of his 'friend' Madame Denis, the dining-room, the library and so on, garnished with lively anecdotes. The highlight of the visit seems to have been viewing the allegorical shrine raised up to Voltaire in his room which originally contained the philosopher's heart. The much transcribed inscription upon it – 'Mes manes sont consolés puisque mon coeur est au milieu de vous' [My shade is comforted because my heart is among you] -- announced to all those coming to pay court that Voltaire was still 'at home'.

This sense of paying a formal visit to an enlightenment salon runs throughout accounts of visiting Ferney in the eighties and onwards. The young Russian Nikolai Karamzin, for example, introduces his description of visiting Ferney during his travels in Switzerland from August 1789 through into 1790 in terms of the etiquette of polite calling: 'Who, being in the republic of Geneva, would not consider it a pleasant duty to visit Ferney, where the most illustrious writer of our age lived?' (Karamzin, 147). He follows the usual programme: the grounds, the view of Mont Blanc, the church, the custodian who had to be 'assured...of our generosity', the admission to 'the

sanctuary, the rooms where Voltaire had lived and where everything has been left just as it was' (Karamzin, 147) He describes the black monument, and dutifully copies the inscriptions and enumerates the portraits and engravings on the walls of the bedroom-cum-study which together amount to a salon in stills -- Catherine of Russia, the late king of Prussia, a noted Parisian actor, Voltaire himself, the Marquise de Châtelet, Newton, Boileau, Marmontel, d'Alembert, Franklin, Helvétius, Clement XIV, Diderot, and Delisle. He reads La Harpe's eulogy on Voltaire on the spot as a way of paying his own respects, and concludes his visit in sociable, convivial, and consciously cosmopolitan fashion: 'I took dinner at the inn in Ferney with two young Englishmen, and drank some very excellent French wine to the eternal blessedness of Voltaire's soul' (Karamzin, 149).

Some twelve years later, in 1802, the Frenchman Lemaistre also visited in the company of a party of English friends, and had much the same experience, except that he was taken round by the new owner who much annoyed him by insisting on having his own 'improvements' admired (Lemaistre, 35). The set-up does not seem to have changed much over subsequent years, except that, to judge from the formulaic quality of accounts, visitors must have experienced a standardised tour provided by the housekeeper. Louis Simond's account of a visit in 1817, for example, is entirely conventional: comprising details of payment, the insistence that all was just as the great man left it, the tour of the rooms, especially the bedroom where a blind eye was conscientiously turned by the housekeeper to depredations on the bed-curtains for souvenirs -- 'Time and travellers have much impaired the furniture of light-blue silk... the bed-curtains especially, which for the last forty years have supplied each traveller with a precious little bit, hastily torn off, are of course in tatters; the house-

keeper indeed is so well aware of this,/that she purposely turns away, to afford you an opportunity for the poetical theft, expecting her fees to be the more liberal on that account' (Simond, I, 553) -- the exhaustive cataloguing of portraits and inscriptions, the walk in the grounds through the favourite avenue (usually deprecating the old-fashioned formality of the gardens and the unaccountable way in which, to the contemporary eye, the whole thing seemed to turn its back on the unrivalled view of Mont Blanc), a visit to the village and perhaps the church (noting the famous inscription *Deo erexit Voltaire*) and the obligatory encounter with an old servant, in latter years the gardener, who seems to have kept a book of Voltaire's seals and some personal articles of dress in his cottage. The aesthetic of the tour seems to have been to do with evoking the presence of the great man. Albert Montémont in 1820, for example, an enthusiastic admirer, lists Voltaire relics that he had seen, including one shown by this gardener, 'Voltaire's bonnet [sic], set with a gold border by Madame Denis' (Montémont, 10). To flesh out his experience of the domestic setting of Ferney he also lists Voltaire's belongings held elsewhere 'the night gown, and the great armed chair wherein he used to read and write', 'the bed gown, and the gold-laced waistcoat...as also the crown of laurel adjudged to him at the *Theatre Francois*, in 1778, and the great chair with a writing table and moveable desk attached to it, wherein he often sat' (Montémont, 10-11, 12). The power of physical relics was typically elaborated by the retailing of anecdotes, extending posthumously the tradition of eye-witness accounts of Voltaire's habits and conversation provided by such as Boswell.

By 1818, when the Englishwoman Marianne Baillie noted that 'all the furniture of both rooms was dropping to pieces with age and decay' (Baillie, 246), the affect that

it had delivered was also showing signs of wear and tear. Visitors increasingly voiced dismay at the commonplaceness of the house and grounds, juxtaposed with such a display of ‘colossal vanity’ (Lemaistre, 35). Visiting in 1836, the American James Fenimore Cooper perceived Ferney as comprehensively obsolescent, and was underwhelmed by the view (inadequate), the grounds (old-fashioned); the church (deservedly now used as a storehouse for potatoes); and the chateau (the rooms too small). Noting the non-exclusiveness of the visit (‘we entered the house as freely as if it had been an inn. Others were there on the same errands’) and summoning up his considerable reserves of cultural resistance, Cooper effectively refuses to attend Voltaire’s famous levée: ‘His bedroom is decorated by some vilely executed prints, and his bedstead is worth just one dollar’ (Cooper, 275). Voltaire’s crack about being ‘the inn-keeper of Europe’ is picked up and turned against him by a dissatisfied guest who feels he has not got value for money.

#### **IV Being Rousseau**

The prevalence of this way of experiencing Ferney as public space, whether as a salon or merely an inn, is pointed up by the marked incongruity of one Robert Piggott’s effort to have the Ferney experience. Piggott was an enthusiast for Voltaire, having visited him in his lifetime, and he carried his admiration to such a pitch that he tried to buy the chateau after Voltaire’s death. According to his niece Harriot Piggott, although he failed in this project, he did at least succeed in renting the chateau for his honeymoon in 1780 (de Beer and Rousseau, 17, 69). While Piggott’s choice of honeymoon destination has echoes of Boswell’s ambition to spend a night under M de

Voltaire's roof, it seems devoid of Boswell's desire to become one of the inner circle. Rather, it smacks more of an ambition to 'be' Voltaire at home. Piggott's apparent effort to convert the chateau into the site for a sentimental domestic idyll seems altogether more reminiscent of Rousseau tourism of the time – so it is not altogether surprising that Piggott was also an ardent admirer of Rousseau. His gesture seems more akin to that of Sir Brooke Boothby, who commemorated his admiration of Rousseau by having himself painted by Wright of Derby in 1781 clutching a volume of Rousseau and reclining on what had come to be known as Rousseau's 'seat' at Wootton Hall in England (Zonneveld, 127). There is a sense in which Boothby and others endeavoured, if not quite to 'be' Rousseau, to occupy his space and stances. In fact Piggott's running-together of sex and literary admiration clumsily recalls Boswell's seduction of Rousseau's mistress Thérèse Lavasseur, which occupied the writer's space and stances very literally. The difference between Voltaire and Rousseau tourism can be summed up in the difference between being admitted to Voltaire's bedroom at Ferney, a formal visiting space, and being admitted into the privacy of the three bedrooms of Rousseau shown to the public – the room which adjoined that of his mistress Madame de Warens at Les Charmettes, the room at Môtiers-Travers ('where Rousseau's house is shown, and the desk against the wall, where he wrote standing, and the two peep-holes in a sort of wooden gallery upstairs, through which he could, unperceived, watch people out of doors') (Simond, I, 30), or the room on the Ile St Pierre, famous for the trapdoor through which Rousseau escaped unwanted visitors, where, according to one (unfriendly) commentator in 1814, 'the bed of the philosophic Rousseau is now at the command of any of his admirers who may wish to repose in it' (Bernard, 215).<sup>3</sup>

As Helen Maria Williams noted, most visitors of the 1780s and 90s travelled with their volumes of Rousseau in hand (Williams, II, 179-80) They were interested in variably combining the pleasures of imagining themselves into the landscape in the position of St Preux, with that of imagining themselves into the stance and language of Rousseau as modelled by the *Confessions* and *Rêveries*.<sup>4</sup> In fact, as Boswell's self-identification as St Preux in his 1764 visit to Rousseau might suggest, there is some evidence that the already-established habit of locating and replicating the emotions of Rousseau's fictional protagonists on the 'classic ground' of Clarens, Vevey and Meillerie may have informed the subsequent tourist practice of locating and replicating the emotions of 'Rousseau' in places associated with Rousseau's life through his autobiographical writing. The effort to verify Rousseau by 'being' in Rousseau's places and consequently his moods is, for example, displayed by Arthur Young, who visited Les Charmettes in 1792, eager 'to view Charmettes, the road, the house of Madame de Warens, the vineyard, the garden, everything, in a word, that had been described by the inimitable pencil of Rousseau...' He is particularly eloquent on the subject of Madame de Warens, rendered irresistible to him through reading Rousseau's description of her which has 'written her name amongst the few whose memories are connected with us, by ties more easily felt than described.' Replicating Rousseau's love, he also took the time to trace Rousseau's footsteps, wandering 'about some hills, which were assuredly the walks he has so agreeably described' (Young, 259). The same tendency is displayed in Friedrich von Matthisson's account of his trip to the Île St Pierre in June 1794. Quoting extensively from Rousseau's *Rêveries*, his comments make plain the ways that the philosopher's autobiography both maps and narrates place for the tourist, scripting and amplifying the placement of both the tourist's body and his emotions:

How deeply were we affected with reading this most interesting writer's description of St Peter's Island on the very spot. What a melancholy delight did we feel in following his footsteps from the room he inhabited, to the orchard, where, with his bag girt round him, he often gathered fruit in company with his honest domestics: then to the hills, the meads and the groves where first, with Linnaeus in his hands, he studies the distinction of the genus of plants, till we come to the very spot on the shore, where on a fine evening he would stretch himself, contented and happy, with his eyes fixed on the flood, in the sweet calm of self-forgetfulness (Matthison, 522).

Lying well beyond the environs of Geneva, the Île St Pierre was a great deal more difficult to get to than the shores of Lake Geneva, remote from the standard routes and requiring something of the order of an hour-and-a-half's journey by rowing boat. The young Karamzin, whom we have already encountered at Ferney, wrote at length about the adventure which he undertook a little later. His testimony is especially valuable because it points up so vividly the difference between the tourist pleasures offered by Ferney and by the island. He is worth quoting at length because of the way he simulates Rousseauistic sentimental discourse (and by extension and implication sentiment itself) on the spot:

Not long ago I went to the island of St Pierre, where the greatest writer of the eighteenth century took refuge from the wickedness and intolerance of mankind, which, like the Furies, drove him from place to place. It was a beautiful day. Within a few hours I had wandered about the entire island,

seeking everywhere traces of Geneva's citizen and philosopher, beneath the boughs of ancient beech and chestnut trees, in the beautiful walks of the dark forest, in the faded meadows and rocky prominences of the shore.

'Here' I thought, 'here, forgetting cruel and ungrateful people – ungrateful and cruel! My God! How sad it is to feel and to write! – here, forgetting all worldly tumult, he enjoyed the tranquil evening of life in solitude. Here his soul rested from its mighty labours. Here he found peace in quiet and sweet repose! Where is he? Everything remains as it was, but he is gone – gone!'

Now I thought I heard the forest and meadow sigh, or were they only repeating the deep sigh of my heart? I glanced about me. The entire island seemed in mourning...I sat down upon the shore....My fancy imagined a boat gliding over the placid waters, moved by a gentle breeze which guided it in place of a helmsman. In the boat lay [the aged Rousseau] a venerable old man in Armenian dress; his eyes, fixed on heaven, reflected a noble soul, depth of thought, and pensiveness (Karamzin, 162-3).

Karamzin's experience is whole-heartedly and pleasingly conventional in its final fanciful summoning of a vision of Rousseau to inhabit the emptiness of the island. Such productions of 'Rousseau' were a common component of the experience of engaging with the spirit of place.<sup>5</sup>

This distinction in tourist sensibility between 'visiting Voltaire' and 'being Rousseau' is evident also in contemporary tourist rituals. It had become customary at Ferney, as



already remarked, to go in for pious vandalism in the shape of snipping away at Voltaire's bed-hangings. Rousseau tourists went in for a different sort of vandalism; being Rousseau entailed becoming a writer yourself through inscribing your own effusion on the walls of Rousseau's bedroom and the pavilion perched above the farmhouse. At Ferney, inscriptions were 'authorised', official, and public, whether placed there by Voltaire himself or by his family and heirs. Rousseau, by contrast, inspired inscription of a more private and sentimental character. The emptiness and unownedness of the island – so unlike Ferney -- inspired private enterprise in the shape of a mass of amateur effusion from the 1790s onwards. These inscriptions aspired to a romantic privacy of encounter similar to that which Boswell had engineered all those years before. This romantic privacy was, of course, a fiction – not only were the inscriptions there intended for all to see who cared to look, but travellers' accounts would often quote them at length.<sup>6</sup> The practice was still more entrenched by 1817 – marking not just Rousseau's bedroom but the pavilion perched on the heights above the farmhouse. F.S. Wagner's guidebook to the island dwells upon the proliferation of multi-lingual inscription in the pavilion and the bedchamber as evidence of the sheer amount of Rousseauistic experience supplied by the island to readers of many nationalities, and lists a number of eminent names left in these graffiti, including Pitt, Kant, the Empresses Josephine and Marie-Louise, and Napoleon himself. The inscriptions he chooses to transcribe are striking in their insistence upon tourism as romantic substitution and visionary encounter. The first reads:

Heureux quand je pouvois, maître de mon plaisirs,

Disposant à mon gré de mes plus doux loisirs,

Dans ces bois enchantés errer à l'aventure;  
Tantôt m'y reposer sur un banc de gazon  
Tantôt sans ce sallon, entouré de verdure,  
Respirer à moi seul une atmosphere pure,  
Et m'y livrer à la reflexion;  
Y renouveler la lecture  
De Rousseau, mon cher compagnon,  
Y rentrer, sur ses pas, au sein de la nature,  
Et là, loin des cités, loin de toute imposture,  
Être avec elle à l'unisson. (Wagner, 41)

[Happy when I can, master of my pleasures/Dispose at my own will my sweet  
leisures/In these enchanted woods wander at random/Sometimes to lie upon a  
grassy bank/Sometimes in this room, surrounded by greenery/Breathe alone  
the pure air/And give myself up to reflection/here renew my reading of  
Rousseau, my dear companion/Here return, in his footsteps, into the bosom of  
nature/And there, far from cities, far from all pretension/Be at one with her.]

This act of reading Rousseau in his favourite haunts is elaborated into conversation  
with Rousseau's ghost in the other inscription Wagner transcribes:

Un soir, au clair de lune, errant dans ce bocage,  
J'y trouvai de Rousseau l'ombre morne et sauvage;  
Que veux-tu? me dit-il, en détournement les yeux.  
Ainsi que vous, mon maître, admirer ces beaux lieux.

Tu fais bien, tout est beau, dit-il, dans la nature,  
Hors l'homme, qui la défigure. (Wagner, 41)

[One evening, in moonlight, wandering in this wood/I found the wild and  
mournful shade of Rousseau/'What do you want?' he said, turning his eyes on  
me/'The same as you, master, to admire these beautiful places.'/You are right,  
all is beautiful, said he, in nature/Except man, who disfigures it.]

And again, in Wagner's own tourist fantasy expressed in prose:

Cette île, qu'il a rendue si célèbre, n'offre point d'objet qui ne soit empreint de  
son souvenir; mais c'est surtout ici..., c'est dans les ombres et fraîches  
retraites de ce bois, que l'on croit sentir sa présence, et qu'à chaque rayon  
douteux qui perce l'obscurité du feuillage, à chaque soufflé de vent qui frémit  
dans les cimes des arbres, l'imagination frappé cède aux superstitions de  
l'enfance, et croit voir l'ombre de Rousseau errer encore dans les lieux qui lui  
furent jadis si chers (Wagner, 44)

[This island, which he has made so famous, offers nothing that is not  
imprinted with his memory; but it is above all here..., it is in the shadows and  
fresh retreats of the woods, that one feels his presence, and with each doubtful  
ray which pierces the leafy obscurity, each whisper of wind which shakes the  
tops of the trees, the struck imagination gives way to infantile superstition, and  
believes it sees the ghost of Rousseau wandering once again in the places  
which were once so dear to him.]

By 1817, as Wagner's guidebook suggests, the practices of Rousseauistic effusion on the island had become conventionalised. Louis Simond rather sourly noted that the farm-house was 'also a house of entertainment for curious travellers, whose names are recorded in a book, with sentimental effusions about Rousseau':

We copied a few of them...some of them amusing enough, but it would scarcely be fair to swell this book with quotations of young ladies' and gentlemen's poetry. A portly Swiss beauty, our landlady, introduced us to Rousseau's room, in the state he left it, very scantily furnished, and the bare walls scribbled over with the same sort of enthusiastic rhapsodies about the Genevan philosopher as fill the book (Simond, I, 62-3).

Simond was inquisitive enough, though, about the nature of this place as an internationalised affective hot-spot to record and analyse visitor numbers from the visitor book: 'fifty-three Swiss and Germans, four Prussians, two Dutch, one Italian, five French, three Americans, and twenty-eight English' (Simond, I, 62-3).

One thing that this brief tour of Voltaire and Rousseau tourism points up is the extent to which tourists took these figures on their own terms. Even those tourists who found it hard to bring themselves wholeheartedly to approve of one or the other nonetheless 'did' Voltaire and Rousseau in ways that they had already scripted. To put it another way, no-one shows an inclination to weep over Voltaire's childhood or to trace his footsteps, or to indulge posthumous crushes on his mistresses. Around Voltaire conversation, anecdote and epigram are produced; around Rousseau, equally

appropriately, autobiographical narrative, first person inscription, encounters between fellow wanderers. Via Ferney and the traces of correspondence that circulate around it, Voltaire is consumed as a figure of the *ancien regime* -- public, elite, and present as spectacle 'at home'. Via the Ile St Pierre and his autobiographical narratives, Rousseau is primarily consumed by tourists in a self-consciously romantic fashion as what we would now understand as a romantic figure. He is invoked via 'haunts' -- as private, countercultural, democratic, and numinously absent. To put it another way, these places attract different practices of locating, specifying, and dramatising authorial life to place; practices around Ferney seem to replicate older ways of consuming the author as social spectacle; practices around Rousseau seem new. Between them, Rousseau's writings described a landscape of lake, mountain, and island as the ground of Rousseau's romantic subjectivity. By extension, they provided locations in which nineteenth-century tourists could experimentally inhabit the same sort of subjectivity.

## **V Departures**

In 1816, Byron published Canto III of his best-selling poem, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. Such was the success of this poem right across Europe in refiguring the tourist experience that for the rest of the century tourists came to look through the eyes of Byron. An already evident decline in the thrill of imagining Voltaire 'at home' was joined by a perceptible decay in the frisson of 'being' Rousseau at home. Samuel Rogers' lines on Meillerie celebrate the magnetic attraction of Rousseau which had come to trump the attractions of rival literary localities:

Here would I dwell; nor visit, but in thought,  
Ferney far south, silent and empty now....  
Lausanne, where Gibbon in his sheltered walk  
Nightly called up the shade of ancient Rome;  
Or Coppet, and that dark untrodden grove  
Sacred to Virtue, and a daughter's tears!  
Here would I dwell, forgetting and forgot;  
And oft methinks (of such strange potency  
The spells that genius scatters where he will)  
Oft should I wander forth like one in search,  
And say, half-dreaming, 'Here St Preux has stood!'  
Then turn and gaze on Clarens.' (Rogers, 192)

Yet, at the same time, because these lines are built into a poem composed as a portfolio of such topographic moments they begin to suggest the glamour of inhabiting a mobile gaze. Despite the success of Rogers' poem, it was Byron who patented this thought-experiment in popular culture. The appeal to the romantic reader of Rousseau's successive flights and retreats was subsumed within the appeal of Byron's self-mythologisation as romantic exile. In copying a Byronic exilic mobility, it was increasingly possible to think encounters with Voltaire and Rousseau, and for that matter Gibbon and de Staël, into a single, coherent, romantic, travelling experience.

Two examples will serve to suggest the way in which Byronic exile came to frame the Rousseauistic places of retreat. The first is from 1814. George Bridges' preface to his *Alpine Sketches* dramatizes a Rousseauistic sensibility with a Byronic flavour; he both invokes Rousseau as his justification for taking more pleasure in Alpine solitudes than in the metropolis and justifies his own projected jaunt down to Italy with a tag from Byron's poem *Lara*: 'Short is the course his restlessness has run,/Yet long enough to leave him half undone;/His early dreams of good outstripp'd the truth,/And troubled manhood follows baffled youth.' (Bridges, vi). Overtaken by a storm in the Jura he retreats to a cave and recounts how he very composedly 'took from my case, *Rousseau's Nouvelle Heloise*: the descriptions were beautiful, the occupations, the comforts, the happiness of an Alpine berger delighted me, and I thought of nothing but cabins, solitude, and a rural life. I almost forgot where I was...' (Bridges, 69). Bridges also makes the conventional visit to Ferney, but follows it with an unusual coda at Les Délices: 'At the Delices we found the bench to which he was carried in his last illness, that he might once more contemplate the majestic beauties of the surrounding scenery before he quitted it for ever' (Bridges, 90). This, surely, is Voltaire being made over as Rousseau.

My second example comes from 1830 when the process of Byronisation was all but complete. Henry David Inglis' visit to the Ile St Pierre characterised Rousseau using Byron's words: 'the room is...shown, where the 'self-torturing sophist' was wont to muse on the ingratitude of his species; and to congratulate himself upon having escaped from the toils of his enemies, and the intrusions of the impertinent' (Inglis, I, 214). Similarly he 'does' Clarens under the sign of Byron's verse: ' "Clarens! Sweet Clarens! Birth-place of deep love". Who could pass thee by? Here it was that

Rousseau dreamed the dream that has made him immortal. These scenes are peopled with the creations of his fancy...’ (Inglis, I, 262) By contrast, he dismisses Ferney altogether -- ‘Before leaving Geneva, I visited Ferney; but with the writings of Voltaire I have no sympathies; and when I recollected the comforts and luxuries with which he was surrounded, and the adulation that everywhere waited upon him, my mind reverted to the lake of Biemme, and the solitary dreamer of St Peter’s Isle.’ (Inglis, I, 273) In 1830, his lack of enthusiasm for Ferney is not idiosyncratic but endemic: post-Rousseauistic, Byronically modern, Inglis’ sensibility is necessarily and conveniently attuned to an unhoused, uncomfortable, despised yet elite, solitary, dreamful and continual exile. To put it another way, we catch him here in the very act of becoming a modern tourist.

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<sup>1</sup> This essay draws upon some portion of work I have previously published as 'Fandom Mapped: Rousseau, Scott and Byron on the itinerary of Lady Frances Shelley' special issue *Romantic Fandom* ed. Eric Eisner, *Romantic Circles* April 2011 <http://www.rc.umd.edu/praxis.2010.watson.html>

<sup>2</sup> *Tableaux Topographiques*, III, no. 38 'Ile Vue de Motier-Travers et ses environs...avec le Tableau de la fermeté du philosophe de Genève'; no: 53 'Torrent du Val-Travers vue a peu de distance de la Maison du Philosophe de Geneve...'; no: 10 'Maison de J.J.Rousseau à Moutiers-Travers [sic]' 'ce philosophe etc.'; IV, no. 84, 'IIIe Vue du village de Moutiers-Travers, avec la maison de J.J.Rousseau, de la Chute du Torrent qui est dans les environs'; and no. 144 'Grotte de Moutier près la Maison du Philosophe de Geneve.'

<sup>3</sup> Simond mentions visiting the room at Les Charmettes, I, 328.

<sup>4</sup> For an extended discussion of the history of tourism in relation to *La Nouvelle Héloïse* see Watson (2006), 133-50

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Stolberg, I, 142-3 for a visit in 1791.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Madame de Gauthier's account of a visit in 1790, II, 38